IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate, each of said storage elements comprising an outer ring-shaped stacking area and a plurality of holding elements connected to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in a radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said plurality of holding elements being offset from said ring-shaped stacking area with respect to said stacked direction, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements;

a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

a tool having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element;

a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

a control unit programmed for moving said tool via said moving means with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, wherein said control unit controls said moving means such that said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced

location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said control unit controlling said moving means such that said moving means moves said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements; and

a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another storage element in a stacked formation.

2. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are stacked directly on one another.

3. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are handled at their stacking area for producing an increased distance between two consecutive storage elements, whereby one of the storage elements is accessible for a deposit or a removal of said substrate.

4. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein said moving means moves said tool such that a distance between one storage element and another storage element is increased.

5. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the storage elements are self-contained storage rings.

6. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the means for depositing comprises inwardly and upwardly directed projections for engaging said substrate such that said substrate is deposited above a ring section of the storage element.

7. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 6, wherein the projections have a horizontally directed contact surface.

8. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein storage elements arranged on top of one another form an at least laterally enclosed space.

9. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 8, further comprising means for producing clean air such that a clean room atmosphere is produced in the enclosed space.

10. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 9, wherein said means for producing clean air creates an overpressure in an interior of the device.

11. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 8, further

comprising means for discharging a predetermined amount of gas from within an interior of the device in an outwards direction.

12. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising means for increasing stability and/or positioning accuracy of superimposed storage elements.

13. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 12, further comprising a centering means formed on one of the storage elements, which centering means cooperates with a centering means of a consecutive storage element in the stacked direction for increasing the stability.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the two contact surfaces of the tool are offset against one another in the stacked direction of the storage elements.

16. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein a relative mobility of the two contact surfaces is provided.

17. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the tool is movable in a plane parallel to surfaces of the substrates.

18 - 19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein a pitch of said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of storage elements is not changed when said tool releases one of said storage elements.

21. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a sealing means for pressing one storage element against another storage element such that said storage elements are sealed.

22. (Previously Presented) A device in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a means for discharging nitrogen into the device.

23. (Currently Amended) A device in accordance with claim 22, further comprising a cover plate and a lower bottom plate, said cover plate and said lower bottom plate defining a space in which said plurality of storage elements [[is]] are located, said sealing means, said cover [[late]] plate, said lower bottom plate and said nitrogen providing clean room conditions within said space.

24 - 26. (Canceled)

27. (New) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein said outer ring-shaped stacking area has an outer peripheral edge, each of said storage elements having a projection extending from said outer peripheral edge in a radial outward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said projection of one of said storage elements being offset from said projection of another one of said storage elements.

28. (New) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate, each of said storage elements comprising an outer ring-shaped stacking area and a plurality of holding elements connected to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said stacking area having an upper stacking area surface and a bottom stacking area surface, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in a radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said plurality of holding elements being offset from said ring-shaped stacking area with respect to said stacked direction, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements, said upper stacking area surface of one storage element engaging said bottom stacking area surface of an adjacent storage element;

a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

a tool having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element;

a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

a control unit programmed for moving said tool via said moving means with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, wherein said control unit controls said moving means such that said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said control unit controlling said moving means such that said moving means moves said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements; and

a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another storage element in a stacked formation.

29. (New) A device in accordance with claim 28, wherein said outer ring-shaped stacking area has an outer peripheral edge, each of said storage elements having a

projection extending from said outer peripheral edge in a radial outward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said projection of one of said storage elements being offset from said projection of another one of said storage elements.

30. (New) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate, each of said storage elements comprising an outer radial ring-shaped portion and an inner radial ring-shaped portion, said outer radial ring-shaped portion having an outer radial ring-shaped portion edge, said inner radial ring-shaped portion having an inner radial ring-shaped portion edge, said outer radial ring-shaped portion, each of said storage elements comprising a plurality of holding elements, each of said holding elements being arranged along said inner radial ring-shaped portion such that each of said plurality of holding elements is located at or adjacent to said inner radial ring-shaped portion edge, each of said holding elements being located at a spaced location from said outer radial ring-shaped portion edge, said outer radial ring-shaped portion having an upper surface and a bottom surface, each of said plurality of holding elements having a substrate engaging portion, said substrate engaging portion being located at a spaced location from said inner radial ring-shaped portion edge, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in a radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped portion, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements, said upper surface of one storage element

engaging said bottom surface of an adjacent storage element;

a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

a tool having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element;

a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

a control unit programmed for moving said tool via said moving means with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, wherein said control unit controls said moving means such that said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said control unit controlling said moving means such that said moving means moves said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements; and

a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another storage element in a stacked formation.

31. (New) A device in accordance with claim 30, wherein said outer ring-shaped stacking area has an outer peripheral edge, each of said storage elements having a projection extending from said outer peripheral edge in a radial outward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said projection of one of said storage elements being offset from said projection of another one of said storage elements.